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**TESTIMONY
OF
COUNCILMEMBER PEGGY NEELY
CITY OF PHOENIX, ARIZONA
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER & POWER
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MARCH 27, 2003**

Chairman Calvert and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to testify in support of stronger federal participation in water reuse and water recycling initiatives.

My name is Peggy Neely. I serve on the City Council for the City of Phoenix, Arizona, representing the northern portion of the City. I also serve on the City's Natural Resources Subcommittee. In my work with the City, I have developed an appreciation for the foresight and dedication needed to maintain the quality of life we now enjoy in our thriving metropolitan area of over 3 million people. Nowhere is this more important than in the acquisition and management of sufficient high quality water supplies for our desert community.

Over many decades, our federal, state and local leaders have ensured that the water supply needs of this rapidly growing region can be met - most notably through the acquisition of Colorado River water through the Central Arizona Project. We realize, though, that the region's need for sustainable water supplies will extend far beyond the availability of this important supply, which took the better part of the last century to plan, litigate and construct.

As we are continually reminded of the finite nature of our water resources, we must ask an uneasy question: Where will our next supplies come from? It is widely speculated that the ancient Hohokam Indians, who were the builders of the first system of canals in our area, did not find a satisfactory answer to that question. The Hohokam were peaceful farmers who inhabited the Salt River Valley for about a thousand years, from about 300 A.D. to about 1450. The University of Arizona's research provides evidence that the region encountered a devastating drought at the tail end of this tribe's existence in the area, giving us the best explanation yet of the Hohokam's demise.

Though our present culture is fortunate to have access to imported water sources, advanced water treatment technologies and sophisticated infrastructure to serve our cities, our job is nowhere near complete. Our population is expected to double in the next 40 years, and there are no large imported water sources of the scale of the Central Arizona Project on the horizon.

As we plan our water supply future, it is clear that reclaimed water will be a key source, and one that could ultimately serve between one-quarter and one-third of the region's municipal water demand. Our ability to effectively utilize this supply will be highly dependent on safe and cost-effective means to treat and distribute the supply for a wide range of uses - including potable delivery. However, to get there, we will need stronger federal participation in the research and demonstration of expanded technologies.

The City of Phoenix currently operates three significant water reclamation facilities that together serve a

population of over 2 million. The largest of these facilities, which is co-owned by Phoenix and four other cities, provides water for cooling towers at Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Facility. Water from this plant is also used for area farmlands and for restoration of wildlife habitat at the City's Tres Rios River Restoration Project. Tres Rios, which is currently being expanded to a full scale project from its demonstration phase in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is a remarkable example of how reclaimed water can be used to benefit the environment while enhancing education and other quality of life objectives. I invite any of you who visit the Phoenix area to tour this remarkable project.

The City of Phoenix and our municipal partners in the Valley of the Sun continue to lead the way in planning and utilize reclaimed water. An example is our effort to store highly-treated reclaimed water underground. This will restore depleted groundwater supplies, provide a reliable source during surface water shortages, and provide a dependable future supply for our community. Numerous local parks and golf courses use reclaimed water, and we are continually identifying additional large institutional, industrial, commercial, and recreational customers.

The major sources of water to the Phoenix area are surface water supplies that are subject to periodic, but inevitable, shortfalls. Because reclaimed water is, by its nature, substantially drought proof, a solid water reclamation and reuse program can significantly reduce the impacts of these shortages. In addition, reclaimed water use should also help reduce the need for additional water treatment plant capacity and help us meet the State's requirement to use sustainable water supplies. For these and many other reasons, we value this resource highly in our future water supply planning efforts, and encourage continued federal efforts to facilitate more effective use of this important resource.

One of the challenges we face in using reclaimed water is the high salinity content, which limits its effective utilization for certain uses. Much of this salinity originates in our source water, but additional salts are contributed through urban disposal to our wastewater systems. Phoenix has been a driving force in bringing this and other salinity-related issues to a national forum through the efforts of the Multi-State Salinity Coalition. Your subcommittee staff participated in our first Salinity Summit last December in Las Vegas. At the Summit, we emphasized that one of our top challenges in addressing salinity is how to dispose of the salt concentrate from the treatment process. We appreciate the continued federal participation in salinity-related research to meet our water supply objectives.

Arizona's rural communities, which are critical to the State's tourism economy, are rapidly coming to grips with water supply shortfalls. These communities are growing rapidly, and the vast majority lack access to adequate sustainable water supplies. This problem has been seriously compounded by the recent record drought in our state, necessitating significant water use cutbacks in many of these communities. Rural Arizona could also benefit substantially from further water reclamation research, technological advancements, planning and infrastructure assistance.

In summary, our reclaimed water supplies will be increasingly relied upon to sustain the high quality of life we enjoy in our desert community, while accommodating our new residents who are attracted to this lifestyle. I appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony to you today, and ask your support in funding the programs necessary to effectively utilize this important water resource.

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